

"INFORMATION AGENCY USES OLD CHESTNUT"

By Fulton Lewis, Jr.

Washington, Sept. 30

United States Information Agency heads, defending themselves against charges of misrepresentation, incompetence and general irresponsibility, instead managed to prove all three.

A House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, headed by Democrat Wayne Hays of Ohio, called Director George Allen and his career-bureaucrat aides on the mat as a result of a House floor hassle, last August 20, when the agency was asking an additional \$22,500,000 for new transmitters for the Voice of America.

The excuse was the Middle East crisis and the need for better propaganda facilities to combat Nasser's radio warfare, which admittedly is his most powerful weapon in building his ambitious Arab Empire.

Irate critics of the USIA in general and the Voice of America in particular demanded and got the investigation as their price for letting \$10,000,000 of the appropriation go through.

After weeks of delay, the opening hearing took place with Allen, one of the State Department's most respected diplomats, as the first witness. He confined himself to glamorous generalities, leaving the specifics to his underlings.

Alvin Bentley, (Republican), Michigan, and Chairman Hays were questioning Voice Director Henry Loomis about the effectiveness of the Voice broadcasts to Russia. Loomis replied that their effectiveness is proved by the fact that Russia is spending more than \$100,000,000 a year in jamming operations, approximately the amount of the entire USIA budget for last year.

Director Allen was so impressed by the argument that he wrote it into a major address he made the next day before the Overseas Press Club in New York City.

Exposed as Fraud

Actually, the figure is an old and exploded chestnut. It was exposed, as a fraud and a phony months ago, when Radio Free Europe -- the unofficial counterpart of the Voice -- claimed that Russia was spending that amount to jam its own broadcasts. And Allen's own deputy director, Abbott Washburn, his second in command, knew it.

Washburn himself concocted the original figure for a speech in November, 1956. He estimated all of the Iron Curtain countries combined, not just Soviet Russia, were spending about \$110,000,000 a year in their efforts to jam all Western broadcasts.

The basis of his estimate was fragile. USIA had picked up a report that Communist Poland claimed to be spending \$17,000,000 a year in jamming operations, and Washburn turned this report over to his technical staff.

## Uses Old Chestnut

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